

**Tibby Xu**

**2021**





Throughout history, East Village has played host to mafia-hits, artist quarters and the country's first cooking school. In many ways, it's one of the only streets where you can really find anything. Of course this also applies to dining.

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Tex-Mex  
\$\$  
102 3rd Ave  
New York, NY 10003

San Antonio natives Krystiana Rizo and husband Dave Rizo (a Superiority Burger vet) opened Yellow Rose late last year, pandemic be damned. Their laser focus is on Central Texas with bean-and-cheese tacos served on flour tortillas made on the premises, chili con queso, and some rare pastries. Another favorite is the meaty and juicy carne guisado taco shown here. The interior is plastered with historic photos and posters, some recalling the area's hippie era. Texas boutique grocery items are also stocked, including blue cornmeal from Barton Springs Mill and Rancho Gordo beans.

The more I eat at a restaurant, the easier it is for me to find the perfect string of adjectives to describe its dishes. I've been to this Texan spot more times than I can count, first at what started as an outdoor pop-up in the summer of 2020 and more recently to pick up bags of takeout at Yellow Rose's brick-and-mortar on 3rd Avenue in the East Village. So based on all the time I've spent gazing into the face of a Yellow Rose bean and cheese taco, it'd be reasonable to assume I'd already written a book of sonnets dedicated to Rancho Gordo beans and fresh tortillas made with Sonoran flour.

But my historic formula (more restaurant visits = better words) has failed me.

Each time I tried Yellow Rose's pressed-to-order flour tortillas, the more daunting it became to do them justice. Sure, I'll gladly tell you these discs are chewy,



blistered, supple, buttery (though they shockingly don't contain any lard or animal fat), and made out of one of the oldest wheat varieties in North America. But that doesn't quite cut it. The truth is that eating Yellow Rose's steamy flour flying saucers unearthed something in my brain beyond the language I already knew. Not dissimilar to a toddler seeing snowfall for the first time. Instead of "wow, delicious, good, yes," I've had to grapple with an unspeakably exciting new baseline for tortillas in New York City. (~Hannah Albertine)

**PERFECT FOR:**  
CASUAL WEEKNIGHT  
DINNER  
DATE NIGHT  
IMPRESSING OUT OF  
TOWNSERS  
OUTDOOR/PATIO SITUATION  
VEGETARIANS

**POPULAR ITEMS:**  
Bean & Beef Taco  
Papas Ranchera Taco  
Carne Guisada Taco  
Chicken Verde Taco  
Beef Chili  
Vegan Queso  
Texas Sheet Cake

If you live in the East Village, you should know about this new Thai restaurant like you know about your nearest hardware store. Respectively, both are full of items you'll likely recognize (like pad see ew and wrenches) and things you may not have seen before elsewhere in NYC (like Sukhothai tom yum noodles and sprayable rubber). Our favorite dish at Soothr is the koong karee, which is a specialty dish in Bangkok's Chinatown hub. It has a pleasantly gooey shrimp and egg consistency, and every rich bite tastes like shrimp paste just called curry powder to say 'I love you.' Whether you order takeout or delivery, or stop by for outdoor dining on their sidewalk or in their gazebo-like back garden, make sure to order it for yourself. Soothr is open from noon to 10pm every day.

**PERFECT FOR:**  
CASUAL WEEKNIGHT  
DINNER  
OUTDOOR/PATIO  
BIRTHDAYS  
OUTDOOR/PATIO SITUATION  
TAKE-OUT

Thai  
\$\$  
204 E 13th St  
New York, NY 10003

One surprise during the pandemic has been the opening of new Thai restaurants, many with menus that stretched the public idea of the country's cuisine. Food of the Chinese community within Bangkok was one example, as also seen at Noods 'N Chill in Williamsburg and Tong in Bushwick. Soothr offers koong karee, a delicious dish featuring shrimp in egg sauce. Other highlights of the menu involve food from Central Thailand's Sukhothai, where two of the owners come from: Kittiya Mokkarat and Supatta Banklouy. A third owner, Chidensee Watthanawongwat, hails from Isan.



**POPULAR ITEMS:**  
Koong Karee  
Sukhothai Tom Yum Noodle  
Mango Sticky Rice  
Nam Tok Moo  
Roasted Pork Over Rice  
Had Yai Chicken  
Crab Fried Rice





Punjabi  
\$\$  
222 1st Ave  
New York, NY 10009

Channeling a roadside snack shack in the Punjab, Veeray da Dhaba is the brainchild of Indian fine-dining veterans Sonny Solomon, Hemant Mathur, and Binder Saini. The restaurant offers what is usually displayed on steam tables at area Indian buffets hiked up a notch or two. Goat biryani is one highlight, and so is a saag paneer made with cheese made in-house, a fish fry from Amritsar, and a ramped-up tandoori chicken not simply smeared with

made by skewering the vegetables and roasting them whole in the kitchen's tandoori oven.

Customers can choose to order items a la carte, or buy set lunch or dinners in the form of Veeray's Tiffin, a meal package that consists of vegetables, a main dish, dal, rice, and naan for \$14 each.

POPULAR ITEMS:  
Bean & Beef Taco  
Papas Ranchera Taco  
Carne Guisada Taco  
Chicken Verde Taco  
Beef Chili  
Vegan Queso  
Texas Sheet Cake



Veeray da Dhaba focuses on Punjabi fare commonly found at dhabas, casual roadside restaurants that are a regular sight across Punjab, according to Solomon, who grew up in the area. The menu, spearheaded by renowned Michelin-starred chef Hemant Mathur and former Kurry Qulture executive chef Binder Saini, includes snacky, relaxed food like Punjabi kadi, vegetable fritters paired with a yogurt gravy; amritsari maachi, a traditional dish of deep-fried fish seasoned with carom seeds and turmeric; and baigan bharta, an eggplant dish

There's pretty much no other restaurant in NYC like John's Of 12th Street. This a classic Italian American spot in the East Village with huge portions, framed historical photos on the wall, and candles that have been burning mountains of wax for probably a hundred years straight (it opened in the early 1900s). But what's different about this place is that there's an entire menu dedicated to vegan options. So you can get your eggplant parm with vegan cheese and your in-laws can eat meatballs. If you're a vegetarian but would rather avoid vegan cheese, we really like the lemon-y grilled portobello mushrooms with polenta and greens.

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Italian  
\$\$  
302 E 12th St  
New York, NY 10003

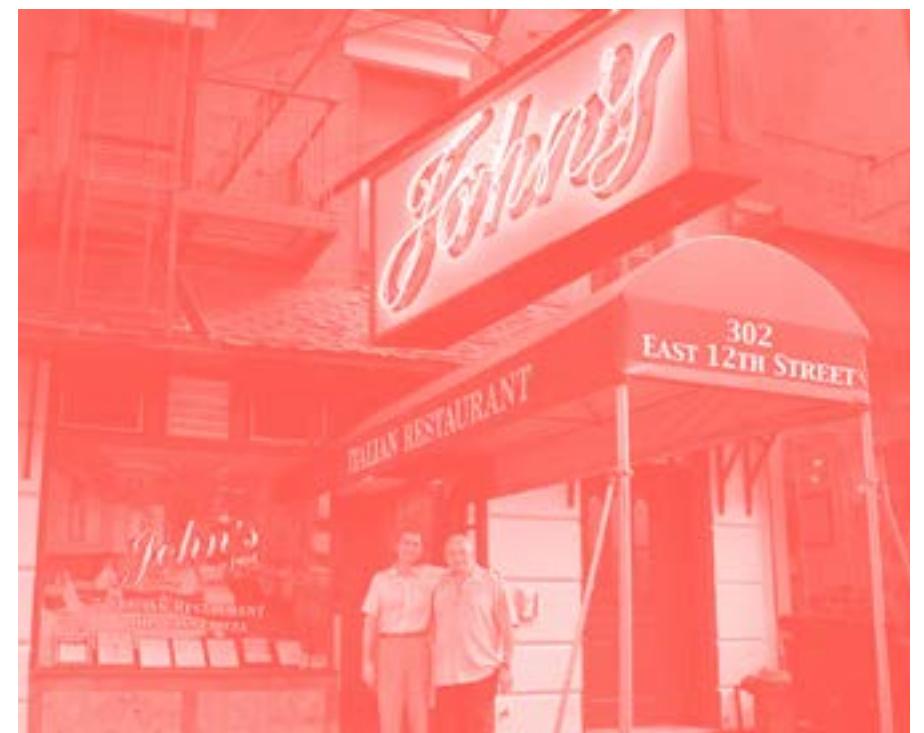
Red-sauce fare dating back to 1908 makes this Italian restaurant a piece of living history. It's resisted most trends but is still charmingly dated with its murals, an intricate tile floor, and a guttering candle that looks like it has been lit since Prohibition. All the classics are here: eggplant parmesan, linguini with clams, spaghetti with meatballs, and pizza, too. A vegan menu available. Former proprietor Nick Sitnycky owns the building, and he sold the restaurant under the condition that it remain open, so John's actually has a chance

PERFECT FOR:  
CLASSIC ESTABLISHMENT  
DATE NIGHT  
BIG GROUPS  
DINNER WITH PARENTS  
VEGAN  
VEGETARIAN

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It may be a spartan sliver of a restaurant, but Izakaya's food surpasses its modest decor. Yudai Kanayama, an expat from Sapporo who came to New York to study fashion, opened this casual spot in the East Village in 2015. The menu is heavy on Japanese comfort dishes, with a few nods to chef and co-owner Dai Watanabe's time spent in a pizzeria outside Naples. Order the cabbage and the chicken nanban, which is fried to a crisp, soaked in vinegar, and served with a tartar-like



I love how Izakaya NYC gets out. They have a thoughtful curation of sakes and natural wines - try their sparkling sake if you can. The BEST PORK KATSU SANDWICH truly is to die for. I suspect the 1.5 inch pork cutlet is sous vide, because it is so tender. The white sandwich bread is merely there to prevent your hands from getting gravy on it, and also adds a subtle toasty sweetness. You can also get little appetizers for

Japanese  
\$\$

326 E 6th St  
New York, NY 10003

Co-owner and chef Dai Watanabe (the other co-owner flea market maven Yudai Kanayama) presides over a menu of izakaya (Japanese pub) classics, hiked up a notch in quality from the usual menus around town. Some of Eater's favorite dishes there include candied smelts with flavored mayo and lemon, yellowtail sashimi fresh as an ocean breeze, and a perfect fried pork cutlet, all of which may be washed down with a distinguished and quirky sake selection.

around \$6-\$7 if you are just there for a light bite.

Popular Items:  
Chicken Katsu Sandwich  
Chicken Nanban  
Addictive Cabbage



When I strolled into Medan Pasar, named after the historic market square adjacent to Kuala Lumpur's Chinatown, a few days after it opened late last year, the first thing I noticed on the menu were these saucer-sized prawn fritters, called cucur udang. Previously, I'd been trekking to Indonesian bodega OK Indo in Elmhurst to get them, so finding them here, at New York City's latest Malaysian restaurant, came as an ecstatic surprise. Costing only \$6 for two, they're also a great deal.

Malaysian restaurants are less common in New York than they once were. Fifteen years ago, Chinatown was hopping with them. Places with names like Sentosa, Skyway, and Proton Saga — the last not a sci-fi movie, but the first automobile manufactured in Malaysia — radiated from the corner of Allen and Grand, constituting a Malaysian mini-neighborhood. Now our foremost Malaysian restaurant is the nearby Kopitiam, which began life as a breakfast spot and became so much more. Medan Pasar, though, feels less like a destination and more like a plain old

Malaysian  
\$\$

102 E 7th St  
New York, NY 10009

A wonderful round fritter embedded with whole shrimp that comes with a sprightly dipping sauce. Other standards of the cuisine are well represented, including nasi lemak, a set meal that features chicken curry or beef rendang, rice, cucumbers, dried anchovies, and a fried egg. The modernistic decor features a giant terminal that lets you alter various aspects of every dish as you order it. The owners and co-chefs are Chao Chen and Chuan Tan, who previously operated restaurants in New Brunswick, New Jersey.



neighborhood joint, representing a modern adaptation of the Malaysian menu for today's challenging restaurant environment. But its foreshortened menu still offers unexpected delights, like those shrimp fritters.

The owners and co-chefs are Chao Chen and Chuan Tan, who previously operated restaurants in New Brunswick, New Jersey. This is their first New York City outing. The deep and narrow cafe has an eating shelf on one side and row of tables on the other, now empty, culminating in a counter. Step up to the counter expecting to order, and you'll be pointed toward a giant touch-screen contraption affixed to the wall, giving the place a futuristic air. Not only are menu items listed, but each one comes with a dozen or so options, allowing you to eliminate or increase ingredients and otherwise modify each dish — at your own peril, of course.



Somtum Der's raison d'être is the invigorating green-papaya salads known as som tum. There are eight made-to-order variations on the theme, the way there are, say, nine signature salads at Sweetgreen. Our favorite is the "tum pla too + kao mun" (with mackerel). But don't neglect the equally hot larbs, or the deep-fried chicken thighs marinated in a garlic, pepper, lemongrass, and red-curry paste that will knock your socks off.

This Isan-style Thai restaurant offers eight made-to-order takes on the invigorating green-papaya salads

Isan food a/k/a a cuisine from the northeastern region of Thailand. Isan gourmet varieties are ubiquitous in the vast landscape of Thai cuisine. Scrumptious choices such as Somtum (papaya salad), sticky rice, hot soups and charcoal grilled meats among many others are mainstays of Thai food. Known for its simple presentations yet layered mixtures of ingredients, Isan kitchen leans towards the



Thai

\$\$

85 Avenue A  
New York, NY 10009

Some of NYC's spiciest Thai fare can be found on Avenue A, where Somtum Der has spotlighted the food of the Isan region of Thailand since 2013, and become one of the city's most distinguished Thai restaurants. As the name suggests, the focus is on shredded green-papaya salads prepared in a mortar with options that include the classic raw blue river crabs, but there are also incredibly spicy meat salads called larbs, as well as deep-fried chicken thighs, grilled coconut-milk-marinated pork, and sour pork sausages. The owner is Thanaruek Laoraowirodge.

spicy side of the taste spectrum while packing in balanced, explosive punches from different but complimentary dishes. It is unique, energizing and simply delicious.

#### POPULAR ITEMS:

Tum pla too and kao mun som tum (papaya salad with mackerel)  
Sa poak kai tod der (deep-fried chicken thigh).

PERFECT FOR:  
CASUAL WEEKNIGHT  
DINNER  
SOLO DINING  
CHEAP EATS  
DELIVERY



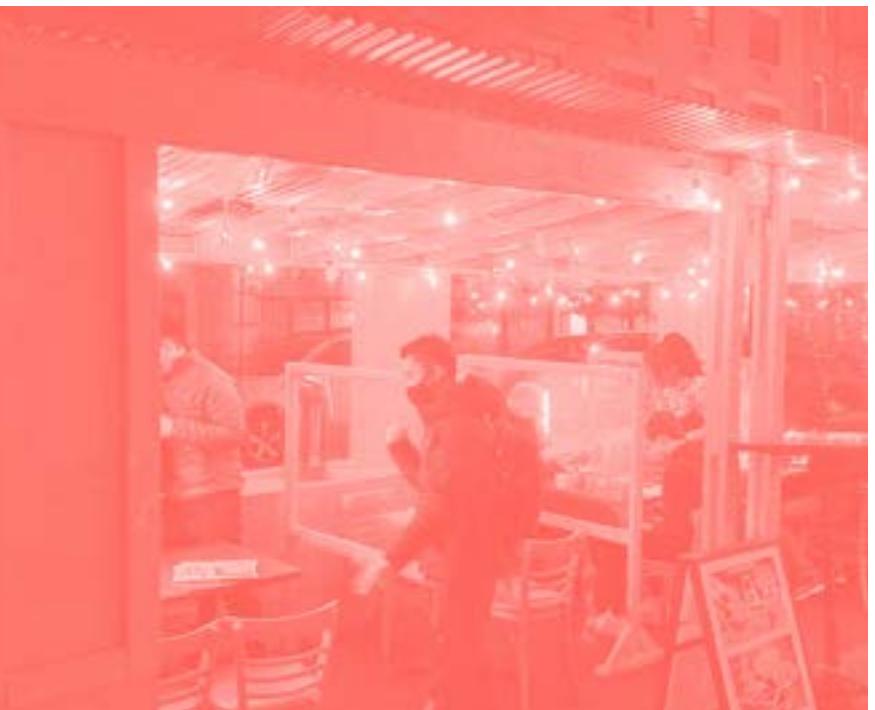
Minca Ramen Factory is a tiny ramen spot in Alphabet City that delivers top-notch, soul-satisfying noodle soup without the hype (and crowds) of

Ippudo and Momofuku. Minca opened around the same time as Momofuku and has developed an under-the-radar following for its signature half-pork, half-chicken broth, as well as its noodle varieties (choose between thin, thick, wavy, or whole wheat). The house-made gyoza, filled with pork or shrimp, are pan-fried to perfection. Note that it's cash-

Japanese  
\$\$

536 E 5th St  
New York, NY 10009

Founded by jazz musician Shigeto Kamada, Minca is a tiny shop that ranks among the best ramen-yas in a neighborhood that has many. The level of care put into the composition of each bowl makes it a destination not to be missed. The Tokyo tsukemen, a deconstructed dipping ramen dish that Eater highly recommends, is a good bet here, although any of the roughly 15 options on the menu are well worth exploring.





This tiny, bustling, Rockwellesque feeding station with 20 seats (six of them counter stools) traffics in rib-sticking southern-style comfort food that can't help but lift your spirits. There's fried chicken flying out of the kitchen at a steady clip, a well-curated collection of hot sauces on the counter (Texas Pete is the one you want), and country and reggae on the sound system. The menu is as small as the space with a great pimento-cheese sandwich on Orwashers bread; a Buffalo tenders sandwich drizzled with Ranch dressing on a squishy bun; and a meal-size winter-salad special one night, studded with beets, grapefruit, and candied pecans. But the fried chicken is the thing. It's brined in sweet tea and fried in a pressure cooker, and it's pretty much perfect: crunchy, crackling, juicy, relatively greaseless, and full of flavor. We were fully prepared to congratulate Mr. Bob White on cooking up the best fried chicken

in the East Village until we read the bio on the Bobwhite Lunch and Supper Counter's website. Apparently Bob had absolutely nothing to do with the aforementioned fried chicken, nor is he even a person. A "bobwhite" is actually a bird, specifically a quail from Virginia, the home state of this restaurant's owner. Interesting. Regardless of who Bob is, the bottom line is that Bobwhite Counter serves up one fine piece of fried chicken that you need to get your mouth on immediately.



Southern/  
Soul                  94 Avenue C  
New York, NY 10009

This snug lunch and dinner counter in Alphabet City specializes in two things: simple Southern fried chicken and lighter-than-air biscuits. There may be Texas Pete's hot sauce and a squeeze-bottle of honey on every table in the restaurant, but the chicken here doesn't need either. It's brined overnight in sweet tea, then dredged in milk, flour, salt, pepper, and a handful of mystery spices that owner Keedick Coulter has kept secret since opening in 2012. If the timing's right,

PERFECT FOR:  
CASUAL WEEKNIGHT DINER  
SOLO DINING  
CHEAP EATS  
DELIVERY

POPULAR ITEMS:  
Fried Chicken  
Pork Chop Sandwich  
Grilled Chicken Sandwich  
Winter Salad  
Tomato Pudding (sides)  
Pecan Pie



PERFECT FOR:  
CASUAL WEEKNIGHT DINER  
SOLO DINING  
CHEAP EATS  
DELIVERY

POPULAR ITEMS:  
Rotisserie Chicken  
Roast Pork  
Pernil Asado  
Alcapurrias  
Carne Guisada  
Beef Stew  
Octopus Salad  
Tostones

Latin                  66 Avenue C  
\$                      New York, NY 10009

Adela Fargas, who died in 2018, founded this Lower East Side Puerto Rican stalwart in 1976, making it probably the longest running restaurant in Alphabet City. The rotisserie chickens — visible through the front window kicking like a chorus line — have been a carryout magnet, but roast pork, fricassee chickens, steak with onions, and Cuban sandwiches were equally as alluring. For the cash strapped, a plate of rice and beans

Unless you live in Alphabet City or actively seek out Puerto Rican food, you've probably never heard of Casa Adela. But this little place has been open for decades (since 1976, according to the words painted on their window). Come here for rotisserie chicken, rice & beans, and pernil. Pernil is Puerto-Rican-style pork shoulder, and it won't be bad. Two things you should keep in mind are that these guys are cash only and BYOB.

This Puerto Rican neighborhood hub's specialty is abuela-level rotisserie chicken, and the aroma of garlic and roasted poultry at the small restaurant is so powerful that it takes all your might not to just sit down on Avenue C's sidewalk and eat right there. You can choose from three types of beans with your rice. Fresh-fruit milkshakes and juices are made behind the counter. Finish with a tasty café con leche. And practice your gracias like a good nieto.

